

**Amendments to the Claims**

**1-8. (Cancelled)**

**9. (Currently amended)** A support member for a high pressure filtration semipermeable membrane,

    said support member comprising formed of a nonwoven fabric,

    said nonwoven fabric comprising formed of polyester fibers containing 50% by weight or more of a polyester fiber having a double refraction ( $\Delta n$ ) of 0.170 or more, a heat shrinkage stress at 200°C of 0.10-0.60 g/d, and a mean single fiber fineness of 1.0-6.5 denier, and

    said nonwoven fabric having a mean value of breaking length at an elongation of 5% in a lengthwise direction (MD) and a crosswise direction (CD) of 4.0 km or more, having an air permeability of 0.2-5.0 cc/cm<sup>2</sup>•s, and having a pore size (maximum pore diameter) of 42  $\mu$ m or less,

    the support member being used in contact with the semipermeable membrane.

**10. (Currently amended)** The support member according to claim 9, wherein said nonwoven fabric contains said polyester fiber in an amount of 30-70% 50-70% by weight.

**11. (Previously presented)** The support member according to claim 9, wherein said polyester fiber is poly(alkylene arylate) comprised of a diol unit selected from an ethylene glycol unit and a 1,4-butanediol unit and a dicarboxylic acid unit selected from a terephthalic acid unit and a naphthalenedicarboxylic acid unit.

**12. (Withdrawn)** A process for preparing a support member for a semipermeable membrane, which comprises:

- (i) forming a monolayered paper web comprising a polyester fiber having a double refraction ( $\Delta n$ ) of 0.170 or more and a heat shrinkage stress at 200°C of 0.10-0.60 g/d, and a heat weldable binder fiber in a weight ratio of 70:30-30:70, and
- (ii) subjecting the monolayered paper web to a heat treatment under pressure to bind the fibers to each other.

**13. (Withdrawn)** The process according to claim 12, which further comprises

- (iii) laminating a second monolayered paper web or other fibrous web on the heat-treated monolayered paper web, and then
- (iv) subjecting the laminated webs to a heat treatment under pressure to bind the webs together.

**14. (Withdrawn)** The process according to claim 12, wherein the heat weldable binder fiber is a polyester fiber.

**15. (Withdrawn)** A process for preparing a support member for a semipermeable membrane, which comprises:

- (i) forming a monolayered paper web comprising a polyester fiber having a double refraction ( $\Delta n$ ) of 0.170 or more and a heat shrinkage stress at 200°C of 0.10-0.60 g/d, and a heat weldable binder fiber, in a weight ratio of 70:30-30:70, and
- (ii) laminating a second monolayered paper web or other fibrous web on the monolayered paper web, and then
- (iii) subjecting the laminated webs to a heat treatment under pressure to bind the webs together.

**16. (Withdrawn)** The process according to claim 15, wherein the heat weldable binder fiber is a polyester fiber.

**17. (Previously presented)** A semipermeable membrane comprising a semipermeable film formed on a side of the support member according to claim 9.

**18. (Currently amended)** A high pressure filtration nonwoven fabric, comprising formed of polyester fibers containing 50% by weight or more of a polyester fiber having a double refraction ( $\Delta n$ ) of 0.170 or more, a heat shrinkage stress at 200°C of 0.10-0.60 g/d, and a mean single fiber fineness of 1.0-6.5 denier, and

said nonwoven fabric having a mean value of breaking length at an elongation of 5% in a lengthwise direction (MD) and a crosswise direction (CD) of 4.0 km or more, having an air permeability of 0.2-5.0 cc/cm<sup>2</sup> •s, and having a pore size (maximum pore diameter) of 42  $\mu$ m or less,

the nonwoven fabric being used in contact with the semipermeable membrane.